



Middle Fork Holston River 2007



The headwaters of the Middle Fork Holston River are located on the boundaries of the Smyth-Wythe county lines above the Town of Marion in southwest Virginia. The river flows southwest approximately 56 miles through Smyth and Washington counties before entering South Holston Lake. There are approximately 32 miles of navigable river that support healthy sport fish populations. While no public boat or canoe access is available, anglers still access the Middle Fork from private land or areas where the river is adjacent to public roads. The upper sections of the Middle Fork in the town of Marion and above Atkins are classified as category A and B stocked trout waters from October 1 to June 15 each year. These sections are marked with signs and open to public fishing with the proper licenses required.

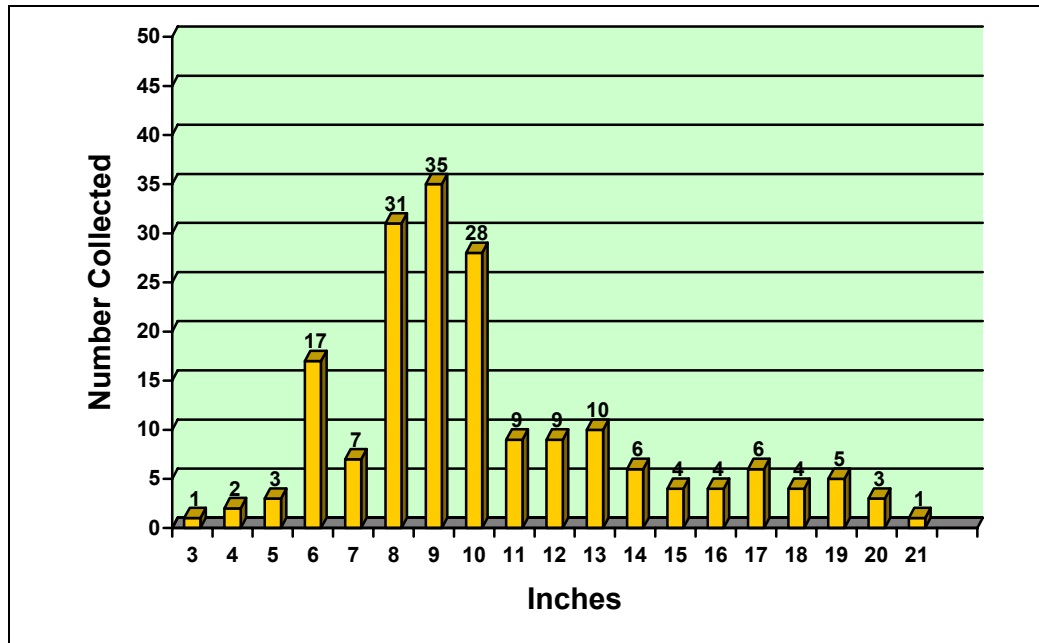
Fish population surveys conducted in 2006 indicate the presence of ten different sport fish species, with smallmouth bass, rock bass, bluegill, and redbreast sunfish making up 94% of sport fish collected.

Common Name	Number Collected	Number Caught / hr
Bass, largemouth	15	4.3
Bass, rock	270	77.1
Bass, smallmouth	185	52.9
Bluegill	98	28
Crappie, black	2	0.6
Catfish, channel	17	4.9
Catfish, flathead	3	0.9
Trout, brook	3	0.9
Trout, rainbow	3	0.9
Sunfish, redbreast	178	50.9

Smallmouth Bass Fishery

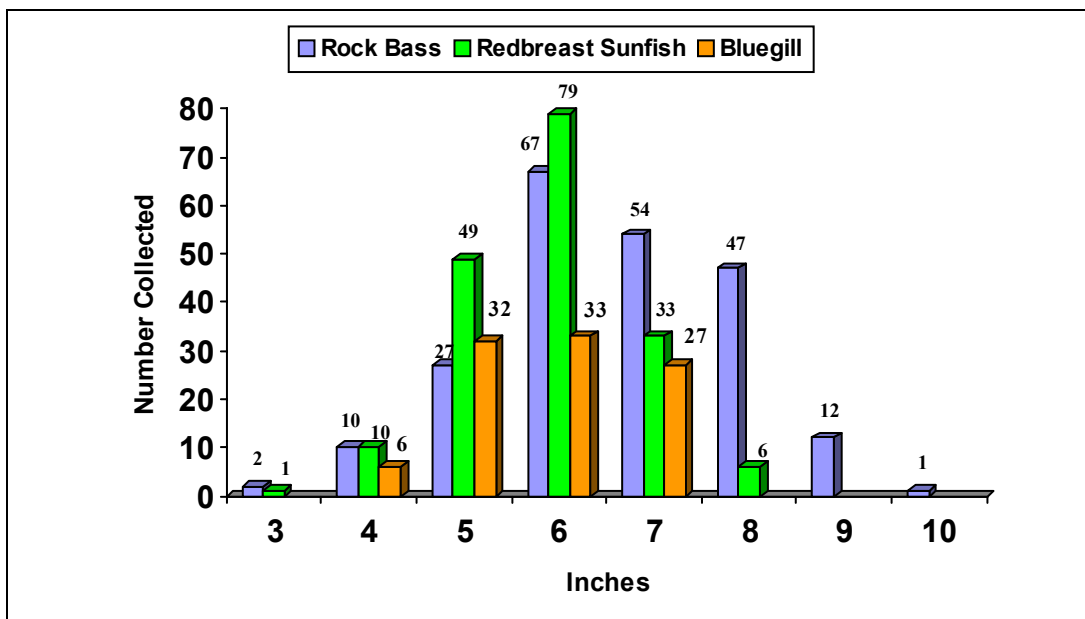
Smallmouth bass catch rates average 53/hr (n=14 samples, standard deviation = 43.4, range = 16-184/hr). This is slightly below the state average for rivers in Virginia, which is approximately 60 bass per hour. The average size of smallmouth bass collected in the Middle Fork is approximately 249mm or 10 inches (n=185, standard deviation = 93mm, range = 66-518mm) with sizes ranging from 3 to 21 inches. Only 15% of all smallmouth collected were larger than 14 inches, and 5% were larger than 18 inches.

This smallmouth bass population appears stable and relatively healthy with good size distribution as shown in the following graph of lengths collected in 2006.



Rock Bass, Redbreast Sunfish & Bluegill Fishery

Rock bass, redbreast sunfish and bluegill catch rates average between 28-77 fish per hour. These fish are relatively abundant throughout the river system and make up a majority of angler catch. The size of rock bass, redbreast sunfish and bluegill are similar as shown in the figure below for fish collected in 2006. Rock bass grow to be a few inches larger in size than redbreast sunfish and bluegill.



Current management focus for the river is to monitor the ten sport species present and enhance these populations when needed through stocking, regulations and habitat improvements. Channel catfish were stocked at several locations in 2006 and stockings will continue in 2006. Investigations into possible public access for fishing and canoe launching will continue as opportunities become available.

Fishing the Middle Fork Holston River in 2007

The Middle Fork Holston River should offer a variety of good fishing opportunities in 2007. The river has good numbers of smallmouth bass, redbreast sunfish, rock bass and bluegills located throughout the 32-mile navigable sections in Smyth and Washington Counties. Smallmouth bass are abundant and can grow to decent size, up to 18-20 inches. Anglers may also catch a few largemouth bass, black crappie, channel catfish and pumpkinseed sunfish. There are no public access points on the 32-mile navigable portion of the Middle Fork Holston River, so anglers are encouraged to obtain landowner permission when accessing the river from private lands. The upper portions of the Middle Fork Holston in the town of Marion and Atkins provide excellent trout fishing opportunities, as these sections are part of the department's stocked trout program. Remember when fishing stocked trout waters a trout license is required in addition to a freshwater fishing license.

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